

Handel & Haydn



One hundred and sixty-first season

Concerts at Symphony Hall

The Chorus and Orchestra of the Society

Thomas Dunn, Conductor

Hugues Cuenod, Narrator

February 26, 1976

HAYDN **Die sieben letzten Worte unseres Erlösers am Kreuze**

Introduzione

Sonata I Pater, dimitte illis, quia nesciunt, quid faciunt.

Sonata II Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso.

Sonata III Mulier, ecce filius tuus. Ecce mater tua.

Sonata IV Deus meus, utquid dereliquisti me?

Sonata V Sitio.

Sonata VI Consummatum est.

Sonata VII In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.

II Terremoto

INTERMISSION

HANDEL **Anthems for the Crowning of George II**

Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon King. And all the people rejoiced, and said: God save the King! long live the King! may the King live for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

My heart is inditing of a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made unto the King. Kings' daughters were among thy honorable women. Upon thy right hand did stand the Queen in vesture of gold, and the King shall have pleasure in thy beauty. Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers.

Let thy right hand be strengthened, and thy right hand be exalted. Let justice and judgment be the preparation of thy seat! let mercy and truth go before thy face. Alleluia.

The King shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord: exceeding glad shall he be of thy salvation. Glory and great worship hast thou laid upon him. Thou hast prevented him with the blessings of goodness, and hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head. Alleluia.

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Artists

Thomas Dunn was born in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and reared in Baltimore, where his virtuosity as a keyboard instrumentalist was demonstrated at an early age.

He was educated at Johns Hopkins University, the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and Harvard. As a Fulbright Scholar at the Royal Conservatory in Amsterdam he became the first American to receive the Netherlands' highest award in music, the *Diploma in Orchestral Conducting*.

As conductor of the New York Festival Orchestra and Chorus he attracted national recognition and critical acclaim for his originality in program-making, informed musicianship, and high standards of performance. He was appointed Music Director and Conductor of the Handel and Haydn Society in 1967.

A scholar and acknowledged authority on performance practices of the Baroque, he is Editor-in-Chief of E. C. Schirmer Music Company, has held faculty appointments at Swarthmore College, the Peabody Conservatory, and the University of Pennsylvania, among others, and is in demand as a guest lecturer and conductor.

Mr. Dunn has recorded for RCA Victor and Decca.

Hugues Cuenod is one of the most versatile and creative artists of our time. A native of Switzerland, he studied in Basel and Vienna, and early in his career sang in many of the famous Paris theatres. At that time he toured the United States with musical comedy. Beginning shortly after these tours, and until 1941, he sang mostly in concert and oratorio with Nadia Boulanger. He has appeared in almost every major opera house in Europe, including LaScala, Covent Garden and the Rome, Geneva and Paris opera houses.

Throughout his career, M. Cuenod has championed the performance of early music as well as the works of contemporary composers. He has performed and recorded music of all styles and periods and is equally renowned for his interpretations of Monteverdi and his premieres of works by Stravinsky, Honegger, Frank Martin and Poulenc. A specialist in Baroque music, he is a regular member of the Glyndebourne Opera Company, with which he has performed for each of the past twenty summers.

He has appeared with the Handel and Haydn Society in Honegger's *Le Roi David* and *La Danse des Morts*, and in 1971 he sang the tenor role of Asmodée in the Society's performance of Jean Françaix's opera *Le diable boiteux*.

He is loved and admired throughout the world, no less for his great personal warmth, charm and vitality than for the singular vocal gifts he has brought to a long and distinguished career.

Program Notes

Joseph Dyer

Haydn *The Seven Last Words*

Haydn's *Musica instrumentale sopra le sette ultime parole del nostro redentore in Croce*, as the work was identified on the title page of the original edition published by Artaria in 1787, was the result of an unusual commission the composer received from Spain. The most important document relevant to the genesis of *The Seven Last Words* is the preface to Haydn's choral arrangement of the piece. Although couched in the first person, it was actually written by his biographer, Georg August Griesinger:

About fifteen years ago I was requested by a canon of Cádiz to compose instrumental music on *The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross*. It was customary at the Cathedral of Cádiz to produce an oratorio every year during Lent, the effect of the performance being not a little enhanced by the following circumstances. The walls, windows, and pillars of the church were hung with black cloth, and only one large lamp hanging from the center of the roof broke the solemn darkness. At midday, the doors were closed and the ceremony began. After a short service the bishop ascended the pulpit, pronounced the first of the seven words (or sentences) and delivered a discourse thereon. This ended, he left the pulpit and prostrated himself before the altar. The interval was filled by music. The bishop then in like manner pronounced the second word, then the third, and so on, the orchestra following on the conclusion of each discourse.

The commission from Spain was yet another proof of Haydn's worldwide reputation and of the lively Haydn cultus on the Iberian peninsula. In a long poem entitled *La Música* Don Tomas de Yriarte addressed the composer in glowing terms: "Long in Madrid thy works, with beauties fraught, Of censors grave have so engrossed the thought . . ." Haydn had received a valuable present from King Carlos III and, by coincidence, Luigi Boccherini, brother of the librettist of *Il Ritorno di Tobia*, was active in Spain until 1785.

Additional details have come to light amplifying the information about the commission in the words quoted above. The commission came from a priest, Don Jose Saluz de Santa Maria, Marqués de Valde-Inigo, who had endowed an oratory, La Santa Cueva (The Holy Cave), in Cádiz. Capitalizing on the intense Spanish devotion to the Passion, he decided to enhance the local Holy Week meditations on the Seven Words with instrumental music by the most illustrious composer in Europe. Haydn remarked about the difficulty of writing seven successive adagios, yet it should be remembered that the Spanish listeners would have heard these pieces separated by the spoken meditations of the presiding prelate. In order to preserve this essential space between the movements, appropriate readings will be read between each of the Sonatas this evening.

The Cádiz commission did not apparently give Don Jose exclusive rights to *The Seven Last Words*, though he presumably received the autograph score (now lost). The work was performed outside of Spain with Haydn's permission before Holy Week, 1787. Haydn also entered into negotiations with publishers, spurred no doubt by an attempt to bribe his copyist, Joseph Elssler, to turn out extra copies. He worked a bit too surreptitiously and one disgruntled English publisher who had been undercut by an English associate of Haydn's Viennese publisher, Artaria, presented the composer with a lawsuit when he came to England in 1791. (The loss of the case did not mar Haydn's triumphant

visit, however.) Such were the requirements of eighteenth-century publishing that arrangements for string quartet (by Haydn) and piano (corrected by him) were issued nearly simultaneously with the original, orchestral version. Neither of these two arrangements is an adequate substitute for the orchestral conception.

It was inevitable that, sooner or later, someone would fit a German text to *The Seven Last Words* and thereby produce a serviceable oratorio. Haydn finally did so himself but not before he had heard an attempt along this line by Joseph Friberth, Kapellmeister to the prince-bishop of Passau, while passing through that city on his second journey to England. He appreciated the performance but, concerning the vocal parts, he thought that he "would have done them better." He may not have cared for Friberth's transposition of No. 3 from E to E-flat, nor for other small changes he introduced, either. Haydn was considerate in his comments about the arrangement because the Passau Kapellmeister was the brother of a close and trusted associate from Haydn's days on active service to Prince Nicholas Esterházy. Karl Friberth sang the part of Tobias when *Il Ritorno di Tobia* was introduced in Vienna. Among his other services to Haydn he stepped in at the last minute for a singer who defected on the occasion of the second Viennese performance of the oratorio in 1784.

Haydn followed Joseph Friberth's version closely in the first four "words" but subjected the others to a more thorough reworking with the help of Baron van Swieten. He also took advantage of this opportunity to add clarinets and trombones to the original orchestration (which already included four horns) as well as to supplement the score with a moving interlude for winds alone. This choral version was performed for the first time at the Palais Schwarzenberg in Vienna on March 26, 1796 and in succeeding years by the Tonkünstler-Sozietät. This association finally made public confession of the "insolence" of its directors twenty years earlier and admitted Haydn to its ranks in 1797.

Haydn's task in *The Seven Last Words* was a challenging one, but also one which appealed to his simple piety. The work as a whole shares a certain spiritual kinship with the *Sepolcro* tradition of the Imperial Court. The *Sepolcro* was a cantata-like piece performed before a representation of the tomb of Christ on Good Friday. This tradition had died out earlier in the eighteenth century and what Haydn knew of it is open to question.

In order to make the relationship between the instrumental music and the Latin text of the Savior's last words even more concrete Haydn matched the rhythm and melodic contour of the initial themes of each of the Sonatas to the natural inflections of the Latin text. In the original edition this is illustrated by fitting the appropriate text to the first phrase of each Sonata. The orchestral version is purely instrumental and these words were not meant to be sung.

Haydn never wrote music more deeply moving than *The Seven Last Words*. By the mid-1780s the outbursts of "Sturm und Drang" (whatever that means when applied to an artist as individual as Haydn) were long past, though echoes of them can be felt in the *Terremoto*. The most intense of emotions are expressed in a mode of dignified restraint, making them all the more compelling. Every note is imbued with the most profound conviction of a true believer of simple piety who at the same time is a great artist. One finds similar qualities combined in Anton Bruckner.

While Haydn's *Seven Last Words* fulfills all the demands that can be made, from a musical standpoint it requires, more than the orchestral Masses do, an awareness on the part of the listener of the atmosphere which brings the work to life. It needs a meditative receptivity to the prolonged time span it creates about itself.

Handel Coronation Anthems

The petition of George Frideric Handel, formerly of Halle in Saxony, for naturalization as a British subject was passed by Lords and Commons in February, 1727 and presented to King George I for his approbation. Little did Handel imagine that a few months later there would be a new sovereign, for George I died the following June and his son ascended the throne as George II. Handel was appointed by the new king to write music for the coronation ceremony. He had held an appointment under the previous king as "Court composer" but his responsibility extended no further than the title itself. Handel would have abhorred a comfortable official position anyway.

The Coronation Anthems were apparently composed in the following order:

1. Zadok the priest (1 Kings 1:38-40)
2. Let thy hand be strengthened (Ps. 89:14-15 and Isaiah 49:23)
3. The King shall rejoice (Ps. 21:1,5,3)
4. My heart is inditing (Ps. 45:1,9,11)

Despite the fact that two published descriptions of the coronation ceremony survive, neither makes it very clear in what order the four anthems were performed. (These descriptions may have been written before the event.) In the absence of an authentic tradition various concert orders have been tried and no serious objection to the practice can be raised.

Handel of course directed the anthems during the coronation on October 11. There were at least 47 singers and, according to the calculations of Friedrich Chrysander, Handel's biographer and the editor of his collected works, the instrumentalists numbered 160! It seems unlikely that all the latter

participated in the anthems. A few weeks before the coronation there was an open rehearsal at Westminster Abbey attended by "the greatest Concourse of People that has been known," according to a contemporary newspaper report.

A heated exchange is supposed to have developed between Handel and the Bishop of London over the choice of texts to be set to music for the coronation service. The argument seems to have concluded with the composer assuring the worthy ecclesiastic that he knew his bible well enough to choose suitable texts himself. (This anecdote, accurate or not, is occasionally linked to *Messiah*.) In any event, the bishops of the kingdom must have looked askance at the prospect of the sacred words themselves being set by a composer noted for his successes in the theater!

Handel had written sacred music previously: one of the finest fruits of his Italian years was the concertante setting of the psalm *Dixit Dominus*. Music in a similar vein was not required of him in England until James Brydges, Duke of Chandos, sought to adorn his stylish mode of living with specially written anthems and psalm settings which Handel provided in the years 1717-20.

Regarding the Coronation Anthems as church music reveals only one side of their function, however. Handel was emphatically *not* a church musician. The four texts he, or someone else, chose permitted a wide range of effects to enhance what was the supreme occasion of state as well as a high religious rite. The anointing of the king with oil forged a bond with the kings and high priests of the Old Testament. Nearly a thousand years before George II's coronation Pepin induced the pope to come north in order to anoint him and his two sons, thereby lending legitimacy to his parvenu dynasty. Since the Reformation the English monarch united in his person the head of both church and state. The coronation was a solemn act of civic religion. The Deity, who was supposed to have a special affinity for Englishmen, naturally smiled benignly on this confusion of religion and patriotism.

As noted above, Handel set his hand first to "Zadok the priest." Its opening "processional symphony" (as Burney called it) leads into the kind of massive chordal passage which is overwhelming in its directness. A contrasting middle section separated this from the threefold treatment of the ritual acclamation, "God save the king." This tripartite structure is also shared by "Let thy hand be strengthened." Its final section (and that of "The King shall rejoice") is an "Alleluja" chorus. "The King shall rejoice" and "My heart is inditing" are each divided into four contrasting sections. The latter anthem was destined for the coronation of Queen Caroline, a thoroughly likable person with a great interest in music. Handel had held her in special esteem from his Hanover sojourn when she was electoral princess. Her death in 1737 elicited one of Handel's most compassionate and admired works, the funeral anthem "The ways of Zion do mourn."

In the style of writing Handel adopted for the Coronation Anthems elaborate polyphony does not play a leading role. Imitative entries are soon broken off into animated homophony. Five- to seven-voice choral textures are the rule.

Handel's proclivity for reusing older music, sometimes his own and sometimes that of other people, is well known. Everything in the four Coronation Anthems, however, was written especially for the coronation. His attitude toward "occasional" music was just like Bach's: once the compositional effort had been expended the music ought to be put to subsequent practical use. Two of the anthems, "My heart is inditing" and "Zadok," found their way into Handel's first publicly performed oratorio, *Esther* (1732). The advertisement promised prospective ticket buyers that the plan was for "the Musick to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service." Segments of other Coronation Anthems appeared a year later in *Deborah*. The additional use to which these Anthems were put has them occupy a pivotal point in the changeover from opera to oratorio in Handel's career.

Before the end of the 1720s Handel's operatic enterprise had foundered and within a decade of the coronation festivities Handel had lost a loyal supporter in the person of the queen. By 1737 he was on the verge of a total physical and mental collapse. During the 1740s, however, he vanquished his detractors and became something of a national hero after the *Occasional Oratorio* and *Judas Maccabaeus*.

The adulation of the English public culminated after Handel's death in the great Handel Commemoration of 1784, anticipating the centenary of the composer's birth by a year. In deference to the then reigning king, George III, the five-day festival commenced with "Zadok the priest." Charles Burney, in his report of the events, makes an observation which relates to the coronation of 1727. What to the twentieth-century reader might seem a touch of humor is unintentional:

The DOUBLE BASSOON, which was so conspicuous in the Orchestra [in 1784] and powerful in its effect, is likewise a tube of sixteen feet. It was made with the approbation of Mr. Handel, by Stainsby, the Flute-maker, for the coronation of his late majesty, George the Second. The late ingenious Mr. Lampe, author of the justly admired Music of *the Dragon of Wantley*, was the person intended to perform on it; but, for want of a proper reed, or for some other cause, at present unknown, no use was made of it, at that time; nor, indeed, though it has been often attempted, was it ever introduced into any band in England, till now, by the ingenuity and perseverance of Mr. Ashly, of the Guards.

This anecdote injects a human note into a distant and majestic solemnity. Handel with his music invested it with an immortality which the passing on of the regal scepter cannot normally claim.

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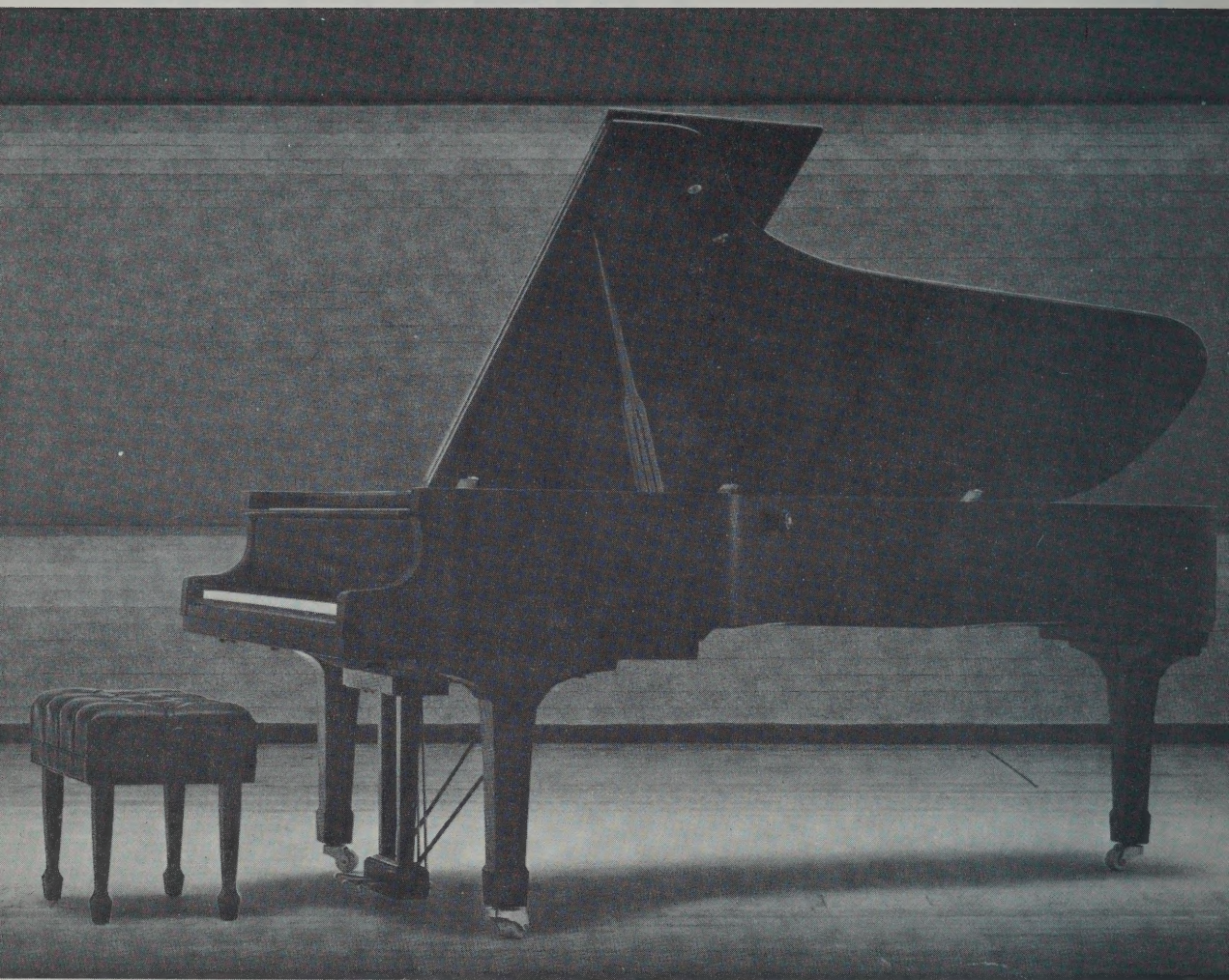
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